

VERMONT STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY
PROGRAM INFORMATION
MISSION STATEMENT

THE VERMONT STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S MISSION IS TO PROMOTE AND EXPAND THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE RENTAL AND HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES ON A STATEWIDE BASIS. EACH NEW ENDEAVOR WILL ENHANCE OR INCREASE THE ORGANIZATION'S CAPACITY TO CONTINUE ITS MISSION AND TO ASSURE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VSHA AS A PROVIDER AND ADMINISTRATOR OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMS.

The Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA), established in 1968, has the distinction of being the first statewide housing authority in the country. Founded by an act of the state Legislature, the Authority was given the charge to improve housing conditions and expand housing opportunities for families of very low, low and moderate income. VSHA is created under Title 24, Chapter 113; Section 4005 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated.

The intent leading to the creation of VSHA was that some statewide mechanism capable of implementing a broad range of housing solutions was required to serve areas of Vermont not within the jurisdiction of a local housing authority. These local authorities are confined to the larger cities and towns; the remaining and expansive rural areas of the state are the exclusive target area of VSHA. At the time, with the exception of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) presence (now known as Rural Development [RD]), federally-backed housing activity in areas of the state reserved for VSHA was virtually nonexistent. As authority to operate several new U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs was vested in VSHA, the Authority pursued available opportunities to expand and fulfill its mission.

Today, VSHA is a fully statewide organization having a local presence in all Communities throughout Vermont. The role which VSHA performs within the state of Vermont's housing industry

and its positive impact on the lives of individuals of very low and low income is significant. VSHA provides direct housing services that reach approximately 8,500 Vermont families.

The core programs of the Authority are strongly impacted by actions at the federal level. HUD's Section 8 and Continuum of Care programs and the housing programs of USDA's RD are funded by acts of Congress. The Authority receives no funding whatsoever from the state of Vermont and no funds from the state of Vermont are utilized to run the VSHA. The VSHA is not a department of state government but referred to as a quasi-governmental body whose enabling statute permits it to own and operate affordable housing. The VSHA Board of Commissioners are appointed by the Governor of the state of Vermont and confirmed by the Vermont Senate.

VSHA partners with private landlords and collaborates with nonprofits, other statewide agencies and municipalities; all dedicated to promoting and preserving affordable housing and improving the quality of life for Vermont families. VSHA administers the largest portfolio of Section 8 rental subsidies in the state and depends, in large part on the participation of private landlords. In addition to administration of rental subsidies, our activities include grant administration of homeless funding and management of multi-family housing and mobile home parks.

The **Section 8 Existing Housing Choice Voucher program [CFDA #14.871]** provides subsidy payments to owners of private housing on behalf of a very-low income individual or family. With a voucher, individuals and families pay approximately 30 percent of their adjusted income for rent. Tenants are free to select their own housing unit anywhere in the state where VSHA has the authority to operate, provided the rent is reasonable and the unit meets housing quality standards.

Beginning in 1993, all funding for new tenant-based Section 8 subsidies carried an obligation to develop and make available a **Family Self-Sufficiency program. This program promotes economic self-sufficiency and independence and is available to anyone holding a housing choice voucher.** Through this program, families are encouraged to move from welfare to work, increase earnings, and achieve greater financial independence. Through collaboration with social service agencies, schools and businesses, the program helps families to set goals and develop the skills and strategies that lead to a sustainable living wage, economic self-sufficiency and even homeownership. Each participant has

the ability to accrue an escrow account as an incentive to continue working and to become economically self-sufficient.

The **Homeownership program**, an aspect of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, lets first-time homebuyers use their Section 8 Voucher to pay for a mortgage and other monthly expenses. Participants pay approximately 30 percent of their income for the mortgage and other housing expenses. Housing types that qualify include condominiums, mobile homes, single-family homes, and modular or pre-fabricated homes. Families must meet a minimum income requirement, and at least one family member, with the exception of the elderly or families with a disabled person, must be fully employed for 12 months before the assistance begins. VSHA works in partnership with the Neighborworks® Homeownership Centers; and families must also participate in a homebuyer education course through an approved homeownership center.

Family Unification, a 1997 initiative, is a collaborative program with the Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS) which promotes family unification by providing rental assistance to families for whom the lack of adequate housing is a primary factor in the separation, or threat of imminent separation, of children from their parents. Program eligible households are referred to VSHA by AHS.

VSHA's **Project-Based Voucher program**, a component of the Housing Choice Voucher program, encourages landlords and developers to improve and expand housing stock through renovation or new-construction projects. In return for making their housing available for use by Section 8 families and agreeing to maintain their housing according to VSHA's standards, landlords receive subsidies that support the debt of acquisition and rehabilitation.

In 2008, VSHA expanded its repertoire yet again and undertook a federal contract administering the new **HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)** initiative. The HUD-VASH program combines HUD Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance for homeless veterans with case-management and clinical services provided by the Veteran's Administration (VA) at its medical centers and in the community. This program is a collaborative effort with the White River Junction VA.

In 1997, VSHA began participating in the **Mainstream Housing Opportunities program [CFDA #14.181]** which provides rental assistance for non-elderly families with disabilities.

VSHA has been and continues to be rated by HUD as a 'high-performer' in the management and administration of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

For properties in need of modest improvements, the **Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation program [CFDA #14.856]** provides subsidies to landlords in return for making their housing available for use by Section 8 families.

In the 1970's and 1980's, HUD designed the **Section 8 New Construction [CFDA # 14.182]/Substantial Rehabilitation program [CFDA #14.182]** to provide affordable housing in areas of short supply. Private developers and/or nonprofit organizations developed new housing or rehabilitated existing stock for low-income families and the elderly in communities without sufficient housing rated safe, sanitary and adequate. Since the early 1980's, no new housing has been constructed or rehabilitated under this program; however, the existing housing continues to be managed for low-income families and elderly.

HUD has currently designated VSHA to perform **Contract Administration [CFDA #14.195]** for the state of Vermont which requires the staff to conduct regular management and occupancy reviews to monitor the management activities of the owner, insure the buildings are well maintained, and determine the needs and/or satisfaction of tenants. The owner selects the tenants; however, VSHA reviews all applications to insure each applicant's eligibility, and to insure that tenants are being charged the proper amount of rent. Tenants pay 30 percent of their adjusted gross income and the difference between that and the contract rent is paid to the owner by VSHA in the form of a subsidy provided by HUD.

Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance program. Since 1993, VSHA has administered grant funding from these HUD programs, and currently serves as the Collaborative Applicant for the Balance of State Continuum of Care. As a grantee, VSHA administers a Shelter Plus Care and a Rapid Rehousing program [CFDA #14.267] – collaborative programs working with homeless shelters, providers and community based mental health centers with assistance targeted to homeless, disabled households. While addressing housing concerns, VSHA works with community

organizations “program sponsors” that provide mental health, alcohol and drug-treatment programs and support networks for clients with chronic needs. These funds represent the most important source of federal housing assistance for homeless/disabled people, especially those with mental illness.

Funding for **Housing for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) [CFDA #14.241]**, implemented in 1996, is a collaborative program, working with AIDS Service Organizations and is targeted to individuals/households living with AIDS. The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) contracted with VSHA to administer the rental assistance piece of the HOPWA grants.

The **ENABLE loan program**, created in 1985, continues to provide financial assistance for handicap modifications to homes and apartments. The program provides low-interest loans with flexible terms to homeowners and owners of rental properties participating in affordable housing programs.

VSHA’s **Property and Asset Management** activities span a diverse portfolio of elderly/multi-family and mobile home park properties located throughout the state of Vermont. VSHA currently manages 25 elderly/multi-family properties and 18 mobile home parks for nonprofit entities and partnerships. Properties are funded through the USDA RD 515 Program, Section 8 NC/SR Program, Section 8 Project-Based, Section 312, Low Income Housing Credits, Federal Home Loan Bank and HOME monies. VSHA acts as a development agent for these nonprofit entities and partnerships and coordinates purchase negotiations, rehabilitation, capital improvements and funding resources.

Many properties managed by VSHA have service and SASH (Support and Services at Home) coordinators who work to help keep seniors and other populations independent by matching their needs with social services while creating a sense of community among residents. Financial support for these activities is grant funded.

VSHA’s Human Resources and Administration and Finance and Information Systems Divisions provide the organizational, policies, procedures, finance and technical systems support to all functions of the Authority. The employee benefits and programs and technical systems are state-of-the-art and provide our staff with the tools and support necessary to do the job of helping Vermont’s families.

VSHA is a key player in Vermont's Affordable Housing Arena and is both cooperative and instrumental in setting housing policy for the state. The Authority's background and tenure in affordable housing is a valuable resource within the state of Vermont and we are a technical resource to and a team player with other housing providers. Our staff is often called upon to participate in educational conferences, seminars and workshops sharing our knowledge and experience in a whole host of area. VSHA's executive staff serves on a number of statewide committees that help formulate and recommend housing policy.

VSHA participates in the state of Vermont's Consolidated Plan and is currently party to a Memorandum of Understanding between various state and federal agencies that outlines shared goals and objectives to improve the lives of Vermonters seeing safe, decent and affordable housing and the provision of services which will encourage healthy families and communities while increasing economic independence.

A comprehensive website containing information about housing in Vermont including a directory of affordable housing in Vermont is available at: www.housingdata.org.